

Christ in Colossians

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

It's often stated that Christianity says, done, while religion says, do. That is, Christianity teaches that Christ has done all that is required by God the Father to satisfy His holiness.

Religions of the world on the whole say, there are things for us to do, to earn God's favour or the God's favour. The Christian story of salvation is based on grace. Religion on the whole is based on works, done and do.

Do says, try harder, done says, trust Christ. As we come to Paul's letter to the church at Colossae, we're going to see that Jesus has absolutely done all that the Father has required of him.

Yet, believers in Jesus, followers of the Savior, also need to do certain things to appropriate what Christ has made available to us through faith.

We don't do anything to add to what Christ has already done in his life, death and resurrection from the dead. However, we do do.

Paul says in chapters 3, 1 to 17, do set your hearts, do put to death, do clothe yourself, do live for Christ in whatever you do. The only reason we can do those things is because Christ has done these things.

Let's see what Paul says Christ has done for us. In summary, Colossians 2 tells us, verse 13, When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. We were all dead in our sins, the Bible teaches.

There is no one righteous. I was with a doctor the other day. I'm always talking about doctors a lot lately.

But he said to me in the midst of a conversation, he said, a lot of people who aren't sinners die from heart attacks. A lot of people who aren't sinners die from heart attacks. And I thought, it's probably expert bias here.

You're a very smart guy, but I'm not sure you know what the Bible teaches because the Bible doesn't say that. Amen. The Bible is really clear.

It says, no, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Paul says, when you were dead, Christ made you alive with Christ. Done.

Done. He writes, he forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us. Done.

In the cosmic court of moral accountability, our debt when we have our faith in Christ has been cancelled. Hallelujah. Done.

He has taken it away, our sins, nailing it to the cross. Christ has once and for all died on the cross for our sin. D-O-N-E.

Done. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. Christ defeated sin, death and the devil.

Done. He has made us alive with Christ. Done.

All done by Christ for us. So what do we do in response? Paul says, set your hearts put to death, clothe yourself in whatever you do.

The always ready book that many of us have purchased and are following along with has, I think, a really great background of the context for Colossians. I'm going to sort of really read from it here. Paul wrote Colossians around 60 to 62 AD.

During his imprisonment in Rome, the Colossian church, though small, was facing pressure from teachings that blended Jewish ritual, Greek philosophy and pagan spirituality.

Some suggested that believers needed angels, visions or extra laws to be truly spiritual. Paul is coming against this sort of hard and fast and saying, no, Christ is all.

And we get a passage in response to these problems like chapter 1, 15 and following, which is just the most wonderful lifting up of Christ, that he is above all, eternal, supreme, preeminent.

So Paul is wanting the church at Colossae to know Christ is enough. Has anyone visited? I know Gary, you went there, didn't you?

Colossae in Turkey? Okay. When I was in Turkey, I said, could you take us to Colossae?

Because there was Laodicea, which we read about in Revelation. Not many people go to Colossae, but the tour guide said, okay, I can take you there. It's not very well uncovered archaeological site, but it was great to see.

It's in this beautiful part of Turkey, surrounded by multiple cities, and you visit these cities and there are amphitheaters in all of them for tens of thousands of people. I mention that because they are very learned people.

It's like a place with multiple cities, sophistication, and Paul is speaking into that, saying, whatever you've heard about culture and what matters, Christ matters more. Christ has done so much.

So then chapter 3 tells us, what are we to do in response? Let me read from verse 1. Since then you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things, for you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

I think it's helpful for us to reconnect with a graph, a chart, a visual, a diagram, that we've used many times over the years here at NorthernLife. This circle represents the human condition.

It's like an MRI looking in at who and what a human being is. At the core of a human being is the spirit, the heart, the will. They're different, but they're sort of similar because they're so core to a human being.

And we are dead in our spirit. The Bible teaches in Ephesians 2 and what we just read from Colossians. And when we put our faith in Christ, we come alive.

Our spirit comes alive. We are born again. And that's what's required at the core of a human being, an alive spirit, an alive heart.

Once we come alive, we need to renew our mind. And that's what Romans 12 says. We renew our mind so that we could offer our whole bodies in as a living sacrifice.

And our mind involves our thinking and also our dominant emotions. And when they come in line with the truth of the gospel, how we feel and think changes a lot. And then this all affects our body.

Our lives are lived in bodies. We are not disembodied spirits. We are embodied spirits and our bodies are very important.

And they come in line with the truth of the grace of God. Our lives are lived in social context. So that's very important to see as well.

Not only the friends that we keep now, but the family of origin we came from. So it's all shaped us externally and has an impact internally. And then that creates the person we are, our soul.

We often say, we don't have a soul, we are a soul. Soul is from the word nephesh in Hebrew, and it means a living being. So that's who we are, and it starts at the core with our hearts that come alive.

When you see that picture of the human condition, doesn't it make sense that Paul would write, since then you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Set means your mindset, it means conclude, decide, believe that because of what Christ has done, I can do, I can allow my heart to be at peace because I know that I am safe in God's hands. In Christ, I am as acceptable as he is to God.

Set your hearts on that heavenly reality that your faith has provided you. Paul says, then set your mind, thinking and emotions on things above. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things because what we dwell upon, we head towards, amen?

The plane has an attitude and that will determine its altitude. And so, who we and what we think about affects the altitude of our lives. What we think about most tends to shape us towards that thing.

So we set our hearts devotion. We set our thoughts and feelings on the truth of the gospel. We remember that I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.

And then we read, for you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. Who finds that line to be an interesting one to dwell on? It's an incredibly powerful scripture.

I think, honestly, it's one of the more important lines you'll ever meditate on. What does that mean for you? My life is now hidden with Christ in God.

If your life is hidden with Christ in God, is that life secure? It's the most beautiful picture of my eternal life has begun. I've been sealed by the Holy Spirit.

I have an inheritance that I'm actually getting part of already. I'm with Christ in heaven already. I am part of Christ.

That is the idea that we are in Christ. I've been caught up in Him. And then the text says, when Christ, who is your life, appears, then you will also appear with Him in glory.

He will return. And we can know that we are safe in Him, Paul says. We are at peace.

When Christ wraps up this earth and all of history, we're going to be safe with Him. It's a do, this idea of setting our heart and mind on Christ. He has done, so we can do.

We set our hearts and minds on the glorious truth of the gospel.

And then secondly, Paul says, because of that identity, because of that truth, your faith in Christ has put you in a place where you are hidden with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ, put to death, verse 5, whatever belongs to your earthly nature,

sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry, because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways in the life you once lived, but now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these,

anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in the knowledge and the image of its creator.

Here there is no Gentile or Jew circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and is in all. I can read that fast because I have memorised it.

Colossians 3.1-17 is one of the greatest verses and passages you will ever find to memorise. Can I commend it to you to just put it to memory?

So what Paul writes there tells us there is something we can do, only because Christ has done all that he did, we can do this. Put to death the old life.

Did you ever hear the story of the man who had had a few too many to drink and he was walking home to his home late at night and he thought I'll cut through the cemetery? Do you remember that story?

He's walking through the cemetery and he didn't know, pitch black, he didn't know that there was an open grave. So he fell in and it's about seven foot deep grave. Tried his hardest to get out, clambering to try to get out for about an hour.

He could not get out, so he just gave up and he sat in the corner, pitch black, just waiting till daylight. But before daylight, another guy fell in. He didn't see the first guy.

He just, the guy was just sitting there in the corner. The second guy is clambering, trying to get out, trying to get out. And the guy in the corner says, you can't get out of here, brother.

But he did. I'm gonna say that joke tonight, no one's gonna laugh. The difference between the morning and the evening.

Put to death the old life. We put to death the old life. It's like we jump in the grave, we try to climb out, don't we?

We sort of take back our life. So what are we putting to death? The old ways, the old habits, the old behaviours that are sometimes linked to those social connections, the old way of responding that comes from the social part of that human condition.

Our family of origin, grandpa lives in my bones, Christ is in my heart, but the way I respond is so much how it's been ingrained in my thinking and emotions and my body.

Paul says, put to death sexual immorality, lust, evil desires and greed, anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language from your lips, lying, put them to death. Do, it's something we do.

Now, you don't do it in your own strength because Titus 2.11, Paul says, for the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people, the grace teaches us how to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled,

upright and godly lives in the present age. Another great one to memorise, Titus 2.11. We put to death through the power of the grace of God. How do you do that?

How do you do that? Well, I think there's a process. I've just reflected on this in my own life.

I think this is a good process. If you don't know how to put to death those aspects of life that are unhelpful, repent, renounce, announce, align, act. So we need to repent of sin.

And that is typically to confess it to God, sometimes to others, and say, would you please forgive me? I want to turn from that to repent, is to turn away 180 degrees. I'm confessing it, and I want to repent of it.

But sometimes sin has really taken a hold of our heart, and it's because we've made an agreement with that sin. Sometimes there's an accusation from the evil one about who we are, what we're like, how God sees us. Sometimes we can agree.

We make agreements with the accusations from the enemy.

And to renounce that is to say, no, if I've made an inner vow about the sort of person I'm going to be, the sort of actions that I'm going to fill my heart with, that I'm going to allow to become idols for me, there's something really powerful in renouncing. Have you found that? Because our words have the power of life and death. Amen?

Our words reflect the great creator who created everything with words, and he made us in his image, and he has designed us so words are really powerful. And so, if you can't break through with a besetting sin, try renouncing it in the name of Jesus.

Say, I am disavowing any commitment, I'm speaking it out, I renounce the commitment I've made. But we don't want to just renounce, we want to announce. And we announce that I have been saved by the completely satisfactory blood of Christ.

I am covered in His blood. My sins are washed as far away from me as the East is from the West. Christ has been raised from the dead.

And by faith in Him, I am raised from the dead and out of my sin into a life of righteousness. And I can be holy because Christ was holy and He has given me His Spirit. I announce that I am a child of the living God, destined for glory and forgiven.

And then we align. We align ourselves with community that are walking in the direction that we want to walk with. We align with relationships that are godly.

And then we act. Christianity is lived in the body. It's not lived somewhere else.

It's in this body. I've actually got to put into action what I have decided to do with my life. Holy habits.

I need to find them, get rid of the unholy ones. Put to death. Is anyone else going to do that for you?

You sort of got to do it yourself. It's a do. By the grace of God.

Paul says some more things about doing. Clothe yourself. Verse 12.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, don't miss the therefore. It's there for a reason, because of what we've just learnt in the lead up.

As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another.

If any of you has a grievance against someone, forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. The Christian life involves living a different way, doesn't it?

A better way, the way of the master. A way that is clothed with all these things we just read, with love. It starts from our identity and ultimately produces a changed way that we live.

It changes our behaviour. So what does Paul write? As God's chosen people.

That means I belong in a new family, all because of Christ. I'm a child of God, and I've been declared holy, as we just said before. I'm loved, and therefore I can love.

Because Christ was chosen, I am chosen. We can actively clothe ourselves, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience. These are all fruit of the Spirit.

We bear with one another, forgiving one another out of love and in unity. Now the circles, the concentric circles, are really part of our spiritual formation teaching that is in a book called Wayform, if you're interested at all.

But this is another very important graph, graphic for spiritual formation. It's called the Golden Triangle. And what is in the Golden Triangle is this idea that Christ has done everything, top of the triangle.

We need to believe that, not just as sin management. The gospel sometimes is presented as, it just fixes your sin. But we want to believe that it fixes our sin and empowers us to live the way Christ said we could live.

Amen? That's what we might call the whole gospel. Not just, I don't go to heaven, I don't go to hell, I go to heaven, but I can get heaven into me now, not just when I die.

How does that happen? Well, on the bottom right, holy habits, spiritual disciplines are really important. And this is what Paul's talking about.

We put on these ways that we can live by the grace of God, kindness, compassion, humility, gentleness. How do we do it? Well, we do indirect training.

We involve ourselves in things like prayer, Bible reading, generosity, care, silence, solitude, fasting, submission. All things that we can do because they're in our control.

And then as James Chapter 1 talks about, there's an aspect of us becoming like Christ, clothing ourselves in the likeness of Jesus, as Paul is referring to here. It happens through the bottom left, which you might say, dang.

The trials of life, the suffering of life. When you ask the question, how do I get more and more like Jesus, or as Ben asked last week, how do I get to the point where I want to want to know Christ? I think suffering is probably how you get there.

It's through the tough stuff. And this is what Paul says, I long to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. I want to know the victory.

And then what does he say? And the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings. Because it's in the suffering that we are drawn to the one who can give us peace in that place.

So we have this done in the process of becoming like Jesus. The gospel is done. And then we do learn the habits of the way.

And the dang is, it's going to involve suffering. It's going to involve challenge. And in that process, we learn to put on the likeness of Jesus.

So to just wrap that up, we receive the gospel, we repent, renounce, announce, align, and act. And we hold on to God's peace. When the going gets rough, we keep believing that, that He's with us.

And I think one thing to remember, as we've been and I've been reflecting on that really important message last week about knowing Christ, we change some, most of the time from the inside out.

Our heart gets renewed, spirit comes alive, our mind starts thinking differently, feeling differently, our body responds in how we act, who we act with, and our soul has this sense of life.

But have you discovered that sometimes it goes the other way? We normally say in spiritual formation, don't let the body rule the roost. Normally, you don't want to trust your body when your body says, I have desires, feed me, right?

We want to go the other way. We want to have a mind renewed that dictates what the body does.

But I think sometimes it starts with when you're trying to clothe yourselves with the way I should be living, find a group of people that are heading in the right direction. Put your body and your social context in a good place.

Has anyone discovered that that goes the other way too? That affects how you're feeling and how you're thinking and the two sort of work together beautifully.

I, over all the years for me, I've never found anything better personally to describe discipleship than these two images. It's been around for a long time and it's really helpful stuff.

I just commend it to you if you're struggling to appropriate the life of Christianity that you know you're meant to be living.

Lastly, in whatever you do, Paul writes, let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. Isn't that a wonderful line? Let Christ and his peace rule.

Because I can let anxiety rule. But let the peace of Christ rule. Since as members of one body, you were called to peace and be thankful.

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns and songs of the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your heart. And whatever you do, did you hear that? You do.

Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. We do do. Christianity is all about done, but there is a part that we need to do by the grace of God.

It's interesting, isn't it, that a bit like Ephesians, Paul starts out so hyper-spiritual in the first two chapters, you know, the one who created the universe with his words. And then by chapter three, it's intensely practical.

Anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language, filthy language, lying. Put it all to death because there's a better way.

And it's going to take you and I doing it, putting it to death, not climbing out of the grave again, but letting Christ live in me. So can I ask you an important question today? How are you going living this Christian life of yours?

How are you going? Is it sort of a case of this Christian life sounds so good at church and in the Bible? I'm there sometimes myself.

I find it a challenge between the, I want to say, my grandma would say hi for looting, the sort of glorious truth of the Bible and the sort of messiness of life living it out. Am I the only one? How are you going living out your Christianity?

Can I encourage you to hang out in today's passage for a bit? We can only do the things Christians are meant to do. There's a lot of things, as we're told, because Christ has done what he has done in the gospel.

But we do do. We do do some stuff. There are aspects of our lives, behaviour that just needs to stop.

So how do we do it? I think for some things, you just run from it and trust in something that's not even that Christian. It's just a reality of habit formation.

If you do the right thing that you want to be doing for a couple of days, a couple of weeks, normally your brain gets a new neural pathway and you start to actually keep doing that.

I'm not saying the Spirit is not part of it, but don't neglect the reality that you just have to stop doing the wrong thing and be as practical as you can by the grace of God about it.

Repent, renounce, announce, align, act, not even throw in, rejoice. Do the work, clothe yourself in Christian behaviour. Tim Keller has a wonderful teaching about humility and he says humility is thinking about yourself less.

In fact, he calls it self-forgetfulness. So if you struggle with pride, just try not thinking about yourself that much. When you have a chat with someone, think about them and not yourself.

And you might find over time, self-forgetfulness leads to humility. And in the same way, I think we can apply that to other aspects of our lives. Get yourself busy not having the space to go to that dark place.

And notice what the spirit and the wonderful way God has designed our bodies works together. To over time become more and more like the sort of person Jesus said we could be.

Second Peter chapter 1, just finishing up, verse 3, is the other great place you want to go to if you're thinking about spiritual formation and the done and the do. Let me read this incredible portion of scripture, chapter 1, verse 3 of second Peter.

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life. So he's done everything so we can do. Through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

Through these, he has given us his very great and precious promises, the mind being renewed, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature. Do. Having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires, put to death.

For this very reason, do. Make every effort. How much effort?

Every. To add to your faith goodness and to goodness knowledge and to knowledge self-control and to self-control perseverance, because self-control needs to persevere. Amen.

We keep on getting out of the grave, but we have to die to ourselves and let Christ live in through us. Add to perseverance godliness and to godliness mutual affection.

So there's the piece of social connection and community in there as well and a mutual affection love. For Peter says, if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, what will they do?

They'll keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Learning to live the way that the master taught us to live, putting to death, clothing ourselves by the grace of God, in our renewed righteous selves. That has an effect on us, so that we can answer my question in a positive way.

How are you going with your Christian life? Well, you can be ineffective and unproductive, or you could answer, you know what? I'm growing more and more in the likeness of Christ, day by day.

It's not a perfect linear transition upwards and to the right, but I'm on a journey with some people that are encouraging me, and I'm in the word of God, and I'm trusting the Spirit and the grace of Jesus. Amen. We can become.

Believe the gospel, top triangle, done. Put to death and clothe yourself, bottom right, do. Trust God in the midst of suffering, trials and temptation.

Bang. Let's pray. Thank you, Lord, that you have won our lives through your once and for all life, death and resurrection and ascension.

You deserve all of us. You're worthy of it all, us. All of our life, all of our capacity as we connect with people, and the incredible richness of giftedness and personality and experience that you've given each one of us.

You deserve it all, and we can only give it to you for your glory by your grace. Lord, I thank you for this passage that calls us upwards, not down, but upwards towards eternal life with you.

Lord, thank you that our life is now hidden with Christ in God. Lord, for those that are anxious today, I pray that you might give them peace. For those who are caught in sin, Lord, you're the one who gives freedom.

Would you rescue them? Rescue, in the name of Jesus, I pray. Lord, for those who need to renounce, be set free from chains.

Lord, in the name of Jesus, by the blood of Christ and the power of empty tomb, I pray that you might set captives free today.

And we announce together, and we will sing it together now, we announce that we belong by faith to the living God and the church that will not end, that is the body of Christ, that will live forever on the new earth.

And Lord, we find peace in declaring that. Thank you that our identity is that we are chosen people, dearly loved. Lord, may we be filled with a renewed understanding of our identity and the behaviour that can match in all the people who said, Amen.